



Ukraine

International Religious Freedom Report 2007

Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

The Constitution and the law on freedom of conscience provide for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respected this right in practice; however, there were isolated problems at the local level due to local officials taking sides in disputes between religious organizations.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion. Property restitution problems remained; however, the Government continued to facilitate the return of some communal properties.

There were instances of societal abuse and discrimination, including cases of anti-Semitism and anti-Islamism. The All-Ukraine Council of Churches and Religious Organizations, Council of Evangelical Protestant Churches, Conference of Representatives of Christian Churches of Ukraine, and Ukrainian Interchurch Council continued their work to resolve differences between various denominations and discuss relevant legislation.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights and raise concerns about anti-Semitism. U.S. embassy representatives also raised concerns about anti-Semitism with local officials and promoted ethnic and religious tolerance through public outreach events.

Section I. Religious Demography

The country has an area of 233,000 square miles and a population of 47 million. A 2007 survey by the independent think tank Razumkov Center found that 40 percent of the respondents considered themselves believers not belonging to any denomination, while 36.5 percent consider themselves to be believers of a particular religious organization. Of the latter group, 33 percent affiliate themselves with the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC-KP), 31 percent with the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP), 18 percent with the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, and 2.5 percent with the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC). Less than 5 percent of those surveyed declared themselves Roman Catholics, Protestants; Muslims, or Jews. Almost 21 percent of the respondents declared that they do not believe in God.

According to the 2007 survey, of those who considered themselves believers of a particular religious group, 33.5 percent said they attend religious services 1-2 times per year; 23 percent once in several months; 14.4 percent 1-3 times per month; 8.8 percent once per week; 2 percent several times per week; 6.4 percent once in several years; and 9.3 percent almost never. Almost 90 percent of religiously active citizens are Christians, the majority Orthodox. Religious practice is generally strongest in the western part of the country.

According to government statistics, the UOC-MP has 38 eparchies and 11,085 communities located in large numbers in all the regions, with the exception of the Ivano-Frankivs'k, Lviv, and Ternopil Oblasts. The UOC-MP refers to itself, and is officially registered as, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. The UOC-KP has 30 eparchies, 3,882 communities--most of which are located in western and some central oblasts--and 2,867 clergy members. Approximately 60 percent of UOC-KP followers live in the western part of the country. The UOC-KP is not recognized by the UOC-MP. The UAOC is the smallest of the 3 Orthodox churches, with 12 eparchies, 1,155 communities--approximately 70 percent of them in the western part of the country--and 671 clergy members.

Adherents of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC) constitute the second largest group of believers after the Christian Orthodox groups. The UGCC has 9 eparchies, 2 exarchates, 3,480 communities, and 2,191 clergy members. The UGCC's members, who constitute a majority of the believers in the western region, number approximately four million.

Some Muslim leaders estimate that there are 2 million Muslims in the country, although estimates by the Government and independent think tanks put the number at approximately 500,000. There are 487 registered Muslim communities, 368 of

them on the Crimean peninsula. Sheikh Akhmed Tamim, the country's mufti, heads the Spiritual Directorate of Muslims of Ukraine (SDMU), which has 64 registered communities and 49 clerics and is a member of the All-Ukraine Council. According to Sheikh Tamim, approximately 50,000 Muslims, mostly foreign, live in Kyiv. The majority of the country's Muslims are Crimean Tatars, numbering approximately 300,000 and constituting the third-largest ethnic group in Crimea. Most are members of Muslim communities run by the Spiritual Directorate of Muslims of Crimea, the country's largest Muslim center. The directorate, headed by Mufti Emirali Ablayev, has 332 registered communities and 332 clerics. The Crimean Tatars have their own governing council (Crimean Tatar Mejlis) and language (Crimean Tatar). Crimea's majority ethnic Russian population is predominantly affiliated with the UOC-MP.

The Association of Civic Organizations-Arraid is a Muslim umbrella organization with 14 regional branches across the country and is one of the country's largest Muslim organizations, although membership statistics are not available. The Independent Spiritual Center of Muslims of Ukraine has 19 registered communities, most of them in the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts.

The Roman Catholic Church is traditionally associated with historical pockets of citizens of Polish ancestry, who live mainly in the central and western regions. It has 7 dioceses, 890 communities, and 527 clergy members serving approximately 1 million persons.

Protestant churches have grown rapidly in the years since independence. In Donetsk Oblast, which many consider to be dominated by the UOC-MP, more than 600 of the 1,371 registered religious communities are Protestant. The Evangelical Baptist Union of Ukraine (the Baptist Union) is the largest group, claiming more than 300,000 members in more than 2,800 churches, with 3,160 clergy members. Other growing communities include Anglicans, Calvinists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Lutherans, Methodists, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), Pentecostals, Presbyterians, and Seventh-day Adventists.

According to a 2001 census, the State Committee of Statistics estimated that there were 103,600 persons of ethnic Jewish origin in the country. Some Jewish community leaders, however, estimated that 170,000 citizens were born to a Jewish mother and as many as 370,000 were eligible to immigrate to Israel because of their Jewish heritage. The 2004 All-Ukraine Sociological Service poll appeared to corroborate the higher figure. Observers believe that 35 to 40 percent of the Jewish population is active communally. There are 240 registered Jewish organizations. Most observant Jews are Orthodox. There are 104 Chabad-Lubavitch communities in the country; the Progressive (Reform) Jewish movement has 48 communities.

The Government estimates that there are more than 15 nontraditional religious movements. As of January 1, 2007, 35 Krishna Consciousness communities and 53 Buddhist communities were registered.

Foreign religious workers are active in the country.

Section II. Status of Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution and the law on freedom of conscience provide for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respected this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally sought to protect this right in full and did not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

There is no formal state religion; however, local authorities frequently favored the religious majority in a particular region. In some areas of the east and south, they tended to favor the UOC-MP. Conversely, in the western part of the country, local authorities at times supported the UGCC and UOC-KP.

The UOC-MP and major Protestant denominations expressed concern over President Yushchenko's continued efforts to encourage the UOC-MP and UOC-KP to overcome the schism between the two largest Orthodox communities. They believed unification to be a matter better resolved by the churches themselves.

The country officially celebrates numerous religious holidays, including Christmas, Easter Monday, and Holy Trinity Day, all according to the Julian calendar shared by the Orthodox churches and the Greek Catholics.

The law requires religious groups to register their "articles and statutes" either as a local or a national organization and to have at least 10 adult members to obtain the status of a "juridical entity." Registration is necessary to conduct many business activities, including publishing, banking, and property transactions. By law the registration process should take 1 month, or 3 months if the Government requests an expert opinion on the group's legitimacy. Registration denials may be

appealed in court. The Law on the Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations and the Law on the State Registration of Legal Entities and Private Individuals contain contradictory provisions complicating registration of religious organizations. Despite repeated calls by the All-Ukraine Council and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), Parliament had not resolved the matter at the end of the period covered by this report.

On November 8, 2006, the Cabinet of Ministers formed the State Committee on Nationalities and Religions (SCNR), replacing the former State Committee for Nationalities and Migration and former State Department of Religious Affairs. The SCNR administers the registration process. Representatives from several denominations were concerned that the restructuring would negatively affect the committee's work, but some acknowledged that the reorganized committee needed more time to prove its effectiveness. Several denominations, as well as the Ukrainian Interchurch Council in a separate public statement on November 29, 2006, expressed concern that former communist parliamentary faction member Georgiy Popov was appointed as acting chairman of the SCNR.

The law restricts the activities of foreign-based religious organizations and narrowly defines the permissible activities of members of the clergy, preachers, teachers, and other noncitizen representatives of foreign-based religious organizations; however, there were no reports that the Government used the law to limit the activity of such religious organizations. Religious worker visas require invitations from registered religious organizations in the country and the approval of the Government. Foreign religious workers may preach, administer religious ordinances, or practice other religious activities "only in those religious organizations that invited them to the country and with official approval of the governmental body that registered the statutes and the articles of the pertinent religious organization." According to the Government, no visa applications by foreign religious workers were rejected during the period covered by this report. Mormon leaders believed that the law is poorly written in regard to missionary work, and they experienced problems with regional officials limiting where missionaries can carry out their activities.

By law religion cannot be part of the public school curriculum. The UGCC, as well as members of the Jewish and Muslim communities, continued to support amending the law to allow for private religious schools. There were few tangible results from the 2005 presidential decree to introduce "ethics of faith" training courses into public school curriculums. The decree had the support of the country's four top Christian clergymen, but nationwide implementation was initially haphazard and was further delayed because of concerns raised by Jewish and Muslim leaders that training courses were based on Christian teachings. According to the State Committee on Nationalities and Religion, plans were in place to implement ethics training based on an interconfessional approach.

According to the law, registered religious organizations maintain a privileged status as the only organizations permitted to seek restitution of communal property confiscated by the Soviet regime. Communities must apply to regional authorities for property restitution. While consideration of a restitution claim should be completed within a month, it frequently takes much longer.

Various religious organizations have religious schools to train their clerics and missionaries. Under the law these schools belong to their respective religious organizations and have the status of religious organizations.

The Government promotes interfaith understanding by frequently consulting with the All-Ukraine Council, which represents the religious groups of more than 90 percent of the religiously active population. The council, which has a rotating chairmanship, meets once every 2 or 3 months, providing members and government representatives the opportunity to discuss interfaith concerns. The council also provides a forum through which religious organizations can consult with the Government on relevant draft legislation. The Council of Evangelical Protestant Churches had eight members representing 80 percent of the country's Protestant organizations.

On June 12, 2007, legislation was signed into law giving military members the right to express their religious or atheistic convictions openly and to buy, possess, and use religious literature and items. It also allows alternative nonmilitary service for conscientious objectors and bans the creation of religious organizations in military institutions and military units.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

On June 14, 2007, the European Court of Human Rights upheld the claim of the Svyato-Mykhaylivska parish against the Kyiv city administration. The legal dispute began in the early 1990s when the parish sought to reregister from the UOC-MP to the UOC-KP. The jury found the Government guilty of violating religious freedom for not allowing the parishioners to register their parish according to their preferences.

Mormon leaders in Kyiv complained that on March 30, 2007, the Rivne Oblast administration ruled that Mormon missionaries could not preach outside houses of worship, thus significantly limiting the missionaries' activities. Mormon leaders attributed problems in their relations with the oblast government to the fact that the Religious Affairs Sector of the Rivne Oblast state administration was headed by a cleric of the UOC-KP. They noted that the oblast administration's

decision contradicts a 1999 ruling by the former State Committee for Religious Affairs that its missionaries could freely carry out their work regardless of location.

In February 2007 the Zhytomyr Oblast Archives, with the approval of the National Archives, ordered the seizure of Torah scrolls that had been returned to the Jewish community in 2004 after having been in the possession of the Government since Soviet times. The Jewish community disputed the archives' claims that some of the scrolls had been damaged or gone missing. The scrolls were to remain with the oblast archives until the Interagency Commission on Restitution decides on their final disposition. The oblast governor and SCNR supported the return of the scrolls to the Jewish community.

On November 6, 2006, the Crimean Tatar radio station Meidan and the ATR television channel issued an open letter to Anatoliy Hrytsenko, chairman of the Supreme Rada of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, protesting the airing of a documentary, "Brides of Allah," from the television series *Sovershenno Sekretno*, produced by Russian Channel NTV. According to journalists, the voiceover on the documentary included negative commentary on Muslims accompanied by video coverage of the war in Chechnya.

On September 26, 2006, the media reported that the Local Council of Ivanivka, Luhansk Oblast, issued a resolution to ban "totalitarian activity" in the territory of Ivanivka in response to plans by a Protestant congregation to hold a Christian music concert near a local recreational center. The congregation requested the Luhansk Oblast prosecutor to suspend the resolution. According to a local NGO, the local authorities eventually allowed the congregation to hold the concert. Congregation members complained that local government representatives disrupted the concert and verbally abused them.

Restitution of communal property confiscated by the Soviet regime remained a problem. The slow pace of restitution was partly a reflection of the country's economic situation, which limited funds available to relocate occupants of seized religious property. In addition, intracommunal competition for particular properties complicated restitution claims for the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim communities. The SCNR declared that the majority of buildings and objects had already been returned to religious organizations and that many of the remaining properties for which restitution was being sought were complicated by that fact they were occupied by state institutions, were historic landmarks, or had been transferred to private ownership. The SCNR also noted that restitution claims frequently fall under the jurisdiction of local governments.

All major religious organizations called on the Government to establish a transparent legal process to address restitution claims. The All-Ukraine Council called on Parliament to impose a moratorium on the privatization of previously confiscated religious buildings in state and communal ownership, but Parliament did not adopt such legislation. Representatives of the four largest Christian denominations as well as smaller communities expressed concern that local officials sometimes favored the majority religion in a particular region in matters of registration and restitution.

The UOC-MP and UGCC expressed concerns that the law provides no possibility for granting "legal entity" status to national religious associations. The lack of such status can complicate property ownership claims of church properties when congregations change denominations. However, the UOC-KP did not see a need for the granting of legal entity status to religious organizations in future legislation.

Leaders of the All-Ukrainian Pentecostal Union expressed concern about the continuing lack of support from the Kyiv Municipal Council in its efforts to obtain land in Kyiv to build its new headquarters and noted that the major orthodox churches and the UGCC had been allotted land. According to the Baptist Union, in 2006 the Kyiv Municipal Council handed over a former building of the central church at Bohdan Khmelnytsky Street in Kyiv to a private company. The site was being used as a hotel and casino.

The Karaite community in Kyiv continued to demand the return of a "kenesa" building (place of worship), which has been used as the "Actor's House" since Soviet times. According to the SNCR, the Kyiv Municipal Council had no intention to return the property.

Members of numerous communities described difficulties in dealing with the municipal administrations in Kyiv and other large cities to obtain land and building permits or to rent office space. However, these problems were not limited to religious groups and in many cases could be attributed to financial reasons rather than bias against a particular religious community.

Some representatives of the Jewish community complained that the city of Kyiv allocated funds for building houses of worship only to Orthodox churches. Representatives of progressive Jewish communities complained about property restitution difficulties with the Kharkiv and Kyiv municipal governments.

At the end of the period covered by this report, the Government had not transferred ownership of St. Nicholas' Cathedral

and a former residence of bishops in Kyiv to the Roman Catholic Church. However, the Church was permitted to use the cathedral for daily morning Mass, on weekends, and during major religious holidays. Church representatives also expressed frustration about unrealized restitution claims of buildings formerly belonging to St. Oleksander's Church in Kyiv, which they stated were improperly privatized in the 1990s, as well as properties in Chernivtsi, Dnipropetrovsk, Lviv, Mykolayiv, Sevastopol, and Simferopol.

OUC-MP representatives complained that the local government in Lviv continued to ignore their numerous requests to allocate land for construction of a diocesan cathedral. UGCC Cardinal Huzar told the press that authorities in Lviv had not returned premises adjacent to St. George's Cathedral in Lviv. Local officials declared that the Government did not have the money to resettle more than a dozen families residing there since Soviet times.

Media outlets reported that on June 12, 2007, the Lviv Oblast Council allocated \$100,000 (500,000 hryvnias) for the reconstruction of a synagogue in Zhovkva along with funds to make emergency repairs and reconstruction to other historical heritage sites, including four Christian churches.

According to Roman Catholic Bishop Bronislav Bernatsky, the Government continued to refuse to facilitate the restitution of Odesa's Roman Catholic seminary, which was confiscated by the Soviet regime.

There was no progress in the resolution of the long-running dispute over the use of a Jewish cemetery in the Volyn Oblast town of Volodymyr-Volynsky. Local Jewish groups complained that the Ministry of Justice continued to refuse to help resolve this dispute.

Representatives of the Muslim community asserted that the slow pace of communal property restitution undermined the authority of moderate Muslim leaders. Muslim community leaders complained in particular about unresolved restitution claims involving a 118-year-old mosque in Mykolayiv, a famed mosque in Dnipropetrovsk, a 150-year-old mosque in the Crimean town of Masandra, a mosque in Yalta, and the ruins of an 18th-century mosque in the Crimean coastal city of Alushta.

The SDMU complained that although the municipal government of Kyiv designated burial space for Muslims in a city cemetery, Christian burials had occurred on the designated land plot and the Muslim community still did not have adequate burial space.

Religious organizations, including members of the All-Ukraine Council, complained that despite their repeated requests Parliament did not adopt legislative amendments that would have given them the right to own or permanently use land plots. As a result they continued to pay commercial rates for renting the land on which places of worship and other religious buildings were located. They also complained that their organizations did not receive exemption from paying value-added taxes despite requests for a more favorable status.

In October 2006, with the urging of representatives of various religious groups, Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovych called for the resumption of the Interagency Commission on Restitution of Property to Religious Organizations. The commission, established in 2002 but active only intermittently, resumed its work in March 2007. The commission's primary goal was to return property to religious communities, and it took 316 restitution cases under consideration. The commission did not make any determinations during the period covered by this report, and some observers expressed concerns about its effectiveness and the transparency of its procedures.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees in the country.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversions, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Anti-Semitism

On September 18, 2006, a group of young men shouting anti-Semitic insults attacked a Jewish man, who suffered a concussion as a result of the incident. According to a spokesman of the Odesa Jewish community, police investigated the incident but made no arrests.

There were several instances in which synagogues, cemeteries, and Holocaust memorials were severely vandalized, particularly in Odesa and Kirovohrad. In May 2007 approximately 20 gravestones in a Jewish cemetery were vandalized in

Chernihiv. Also in May incidents of vandalism to synagogues in Dnepropetrovsk and Kolomiya were reported. Police investigated the vandalism but reported no results. In March 2007 vandals painted Nazi symbols on Holocaust memorials in Berdychiv, Zhytomyr Oblast, and Oleksandriya, Kirovohrad Oblast. Law enforcement agencies were investigating the incidents. On February 19, 2007, vandals desecrated a memorial to Jewish Holocaust victims, a memorial plaque in honor of Jewish activist Leon Pinsker, and more than 300 tombstones at the Third Jewish cemetery in Odesa, on which swastikas were drawn. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the local government, and representatives of all religious denominations and ethnic communities strongly condemned the desecration. Local and national law enforcement authorities quickly formed a task force that led to the arrests of three individuals who claimed they desecrated the monuments to see how the public would react. Police declared that none of the vandals belonged to extremist groups, although one of them said he was interested in Nazi literature. Some observers believed that there may have been more perpetrators due to the extent of the desecration. In Kirovohrad the Choral Synagogue was vandalized at least five separate times. According to representatives of the local Jewish community, law enforcement authorities made no progress in the investigation. Except for the arrests in the case of Odesa's Jewish cemetery, there were no other reports of effective police followup to cases of vandalism. In Zhytomyr police had made no criminal charges but continued their investigation in a case involving two teenagers who pleaded guilty to vandalizing several tombstones at an old Jewish cemetery in May 2006.

Anti-Semitic articles appeared frequently in small publications and irregular newsletters, although such articles rarely appeared in the national press. The Interregional Academy of Personnel Management (MAUP), which receives significant funding from several Middle Eastern government sources, remained the most persistent anti-Semitic presence. MAUP, a commuter college that claimed to have more than 50,000 students, published a monthly journal *Personnel* and a weekly newspaper *Personnel Plus*, which were the subjects of an ongoing criminal investigation by the Prosecutor General's Office. According to Jewish organizations, MAUP accounted for nearly 90 percent of all anti-Semitic material published in the country during the period covered by this report. In March 2006, 7 such affiliates, out of approximately 50 across the country, were closed because of unspecified licensing violations; 30 more were closed before the September 27, 2006, commemoration of the Babyn Yar massacre, at which President Yushchenko criticized ethnic intolerance and religious hostility in the country. In November 2006 he issued a presidential order to the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) and Ministry of Science and Education to investigate manifestations of xenophobia at MAUP. In February 2007, following MAUP's successful appeal to the Kyiv Commercial Court, the Ministry of Education was ordered to restore the licenses of 26 regional branches. In May 2007 the mayor of Kyiv responded to the opening of a MAUP bookstand earlier in the month selling anti-Semitic literature near the site of the memorial to the victims of Babyn Yar massacre by closing it and promising to close other MAUP bookstands in the city. MAUP filed a lawsuit against the mayor for his order to remove the bookstand.

In fall 2006, after receiving complaints from the international community, the Government removed copies of the anti-Semitic publication *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* from Parliament, where it was being sold at kiosks.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

On May 23, 2007, the Prosecutor General's Office dropped its investigation into claims that the All-Ukraine Baptist Union had illegally acquired its headquarters in downtown Kyiv. The Baptist Union, which had received unanimous support from members of the All Ukraine Council in its efforts to keep its headquarters, appealed to senior government leaders, including President Yushchenko, who in December 2006 instructed the Ministry of Justice and Prosecutor General to make a determination on the case.

On April 11, 2007, President Yushchenko sent letters to the Prosecutor General, the acting SBU Chairman, and the Minister of Interior expressing his concern over a growing number of reports about desecration of monuments to the country's heroes and war victims, vandalism against Jewish burial sites, and an increase in the number and activity of youth extremist groups. He requested that officials take urgent measures to bring to justice those involved.

On March 21, 2007, the city of Yalta established a commission that recommended a mass grave site, containing mostly Holocaust victims, be given protected status after members of Jewish community raised concerns that the site could be used for commercial or residential development.

On February 26, 2007, Odesa's Presbyterian community won a court ruling on the local actors' guild effort to gain ownership of the recently renovated historical Presbyterian church building, and the actors' guild appeal of the verdict was overruled.

On several occasions, President Yushchenko made strong statements against ethnic and religious intolerance. On January 27, 2007, on International Holocaust Remembrance Day, President Yushchenko spoke out strongly against manifestations of xenophobia and anti-Semitism. On September 27, 2006, President Yushchenko spoke out forcefully against anti-Semitism at the ceremony to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the Babyn Yar Massacre in Kyiv, which was attended by senior government officials, and foreign leaders.

According to the SCNR, in August 2006 the kenesa building in Yevpatoriya, Crimea was returned to the local Karaite community.

The SCNR, together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Internal Affairs, State Border Guard Committee, State Customs Service, State Committee for Tourism, and other agencies, cooperated to support Jewish pilgrimages to the burial site in Uman of Rabbi Nakhman Tsadyk, founder of the Bratslav Hasidic movement. According to the media, more than 20,000 Hasidim traveled to Uman in September 2006.

Unlike in previous years, there were no reports of problems with registration for minority and nontraditional religious groups. The Spiritual Directorate of Muslims of Ukraine noted that the longstanding problem with registering a community in Kharkiv Oblast was resolved. The Progressive Jewish movement also noted that its registration problem in Dnipropetrovsk had been resolved.

Section III. Societal Abuses and Discrimination

On December 19, 2006, a foreign Jehovah's Witnesses missionary in Kremenchuk, Poltavaska Oblast, was severely beaten and hospitalized with serious brain injuries. There were previous acts of harassment and vandalism directed against foreign missionaries and members of Jehovah's Witnesses in Kremenchuk. At the end of the period covered by this report, police had not begun an investigation.

On July 8 and again on August 12, 2006, anti-Tatar vigilantes, some of whom referred to themselves as Cossacks, used force against Crimean Tatars demanding the removal of an open-air market from an ancient Muslim cemetery in Bakhchysarai. Riot police were brought to the area to stop the violence. The market was subsequently removed from the cemetery.

Leaders of Jehovah's Witnesses complained that on August 29, 2006, the Cherkassy Appeals Court upheld a lower court's decision to free a UOC-MP priest who attacked two members of Jehovah's Witnesses in 2005. They also complained that in September 2006 the Horlivka City Court sentenced a man to 12 months in prison for hooliganism instead of the more serious crime of inciting religious hatred for the 2005 attack on two members of Jehovah's Witnesses.

According to media reports, from January to mid-May 2007 the Interior Ministry registered 873 instances of desecration of burial sites around the country. There were also several instances in which churches and cemeteries were vandalized, particularly in Odesa Oblast and Crimea. On April 26, 2007, vandals painted antireligious symbols on a UOC-MP church and gravestones in Izmail, Odesa Oblast. Police investigated the incident but made no arrests. In April 2007 vandals broke 35 gravestones at a Muslim cemetery in the village of Sofiivka near Simferopol. Police investigated the incident but made no arrests. On April 16, the chairman of the Crimean Parliament, Anatoliy Hrytsenko, made a statement strongly condemning the desecration. On July 1, 2006, a statue of the Mother of God was vandalized in Lviv. The vandals were not identified.

The UOC-MP and UOC-KP were unable to resolve differences concerning the Holy Trinity Church in Rokhmaniv Village in Ternopil Oblast despite an August 31, 2006, ruling by the High Administrative Court overturning a 2005 resolution by the Ternopil Region State Administration that parishioners of the two groups should share the church. On June 22, 2007, while commenting on the events in Rokhmaniv, SCNR Chairman Popov stated that although the SCNR hoped to see an end to the practice of various denominations sharing a place of worship, the Government should not intrude in interdenominational disputes.

Mejlis members and Crimea-based human rights groups continued to criticize the Crimean government for permitting schools to use textbooks that contained inflammatory and historically inaccurate material about Tatar Muslims despite government promises to address their concerns. Human rights activists specifically noted that a common textbook for fifth-grade students, Viktor Misan's *Stories on the History of Ukraine*, and A.K. Shchvidko's eighth-grade textbook, *History of Ukraine, 16-18th Centuries*, depicted Muslims in a negative light.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government and religious leaders as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. A majority of foreign religious workers were American citizens, and the U.S. Embassy continued to intervene as necessary to defend their rights to due process under the law.

The U.S. Ambassador and other officials maintained an ongoing dialogue with government and religious leaders and stayed in close contact with clerics and lay leaders in religious communities. The Embassy tracked developments in religious freedom and cultural heritage preservation court cases involving anti-Semitism, including the Sambir and

Volodymyr-Volynsky Jewish cemetery cases, and followed closely the rise in anti-Semitic incidents in Dnipropetrovsk and cases involving discrimination against Tatars in Crimea. U.S. government officials raised concerns about religious freedom and anti-Semitism with the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Office of the Prosecutor General, Office of the Prime Minister, and Presidential Secretariat. The Ambassador and other senior U.S. officials, including the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism, also raised concerns directly with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cabinet of Ministers, Ministry of Science and Education, and the country's embassy in Washington about the anti-Semitic teachings and publications of MAUP.

Embassy officers tracked developments in religious freedom court cases involving different religious groups. For example, the Embassy wrote the mayor of Odesa asking the city to ensure that the Reformed Presbyterian Church receive due process in its court case with the local actors' guild to keep its recently renovated church. The Embassy wrote the mayor of Simferopol to encourage the city to support the local Jewish community's efforts to construct a new synagogue in the city. Embassy representatives met periodically with leaders of Baptist Union to obtain updates on the status of its legal struggle to keep its downtown Kyiv headquarters, which it won in May 2007.

Throughout the period covered by this report, the Ambassador raised the broader topics of communal property restitution and cultural heritage preservation in meetings and correspondence with government officials at the highest levels, including the President, Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, Justice Minister, and Transportation Minister. Embassy officials were in contact with Uman city officials and local Jewish leaders to track developments in the planned construction of a building in a residential area that could damage what remains of the city's historic Jewish cemetery. The Embassy wrote the mayor of Yalta regarding a mass grave site for Holocaust victims, encouraging the city to grant it protection against development.

Embassy officers continued to maintain close contact not only with clerics but also with lay leaders in religious communities and representatives of faith-based social service organizations, such as Caritas, the American-Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, and the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, that were active in the country. In addition, the Ambassador facilitated similar meetings with these groups for members of Congress and other visiting U.S. officials.

The Ambassador met with the leaders of the four largest Christian denominations--the UOC-MP, UOC-KP, UGCC, and Baptist Union--to discuss the status of religious freedom in the country. The Ambassador also met with leaders of the Jewish and Islamic communities, and embassy officers met with religious leaders in Kyiv and Crimea to better understand the concerns of those communities.

The Embassy released a statement to the press condemning the February 2007 desecration of the Jewish cemetery and monuments in Odesa. In November 2006 the Embassy sponsored a visit from the director of the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles, California, to share experiences in promoting tolerance and trust in a multicultural society with various Ukrainian audiences in Simferopol and Kyiv.

Embassy representatives met with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and law enforcement officials to express concern about the attack on a missionary and press for a thorough investigation of the incident.

The Embassy continued funding for a grant to Ukrainian Catholic University's Institute of Religion and Society to monitor religious freedom in the country and post the results on its website.

Released on September 14, 2007

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